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Dianne Wampler 09/01/2006 08:38:39 AM From DB/Inbox: Dianne Wampler

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Text:

UNCLAS ANKARA 05018

SIPDIS

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ACTION: PA
INFO: PMA ECON AMB DCM POL

DISSEMINATION: PAO /1

CHARGE: ICAS

APPROVED: PA:DSREEBNY

DRAFTED: PA:SMORIMURA

CLEARED: PA: KSCHALOW

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RR RUEHC RUEHDA RUEHIT

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FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 8299

INFO RUEHDA/AMCONSUL ADANA 1049

RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 1187

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 ANKARA 005018

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR/PPD, EUR/UBI, INFO EUR-DAS C.GRAFFY, INR/R/EUR

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OPRC](#) [PREL](#) [KPAO](#) [TU](#) [IS](#) [LE](#)

SUBJECT: SUPER MASONIC PUPPIES AND OTHER INSULTS: ANKARA'S
"ASK THE AMBASSADOR" OFFERS A SNAPSHOT OF TURKISH PUBLIC
OPINION DURING THE CONFLICT BETWEEN ISRAEL AND HEZBOLLAH

¶1. Summary: During the course of the July-August conflict between Hezbollah and Israel, there was a noticeable change in the nature of comments and questions coming into Embassy Ankara's "Ask the Ambassador" website feature. Before the conflict, most of the approximately 30 messages received per week involved visa-related questions. During the most intense days of fighting, the majority of messages contained condemnations and accusations (sometimes vulgar, often vitriolic) against perceived U.S. support of Israel's "inhuman attacks" and U.S. hypocrisy for defending Israel's right to self-defense while telling Turkey it would be "unwise" to launch cross-border operations against the PKK in northern Iraq. While submissions to "Ask the Ambassador" are by no means a scientific survey, they do provide an insight into at least the short-term effects of the extreme media images and coverage of the conflict on Turkish perceptions. End Summary.

¶2. In March 2006, Embassy Ankara added the "Ask the Ambassador" feature to the Post website to provide a mechanism by which visitors could communicate with the Ambassador. Until the conflict between Hezbollah and Israel, approximately 30 messages per week came in through the feature. Most of them asked questions about visas or study in the U.S., while others posed questions on such topics as Iran policy, the war in Iraq, U.S. interest in the Black Sea and dealing with the PKK.

¶3. As the conflict heated up, so did the quantity and tone of messages to "Ask the Ambassador." We received 65 messages during the week of July 17, and almost 200 during the month-long course of the war. Most messages condemned the U.S. for "double standard" policies, with some asking why the U.S. did not take action to stop Israel. One message read, "Stop the Israeli violence in Lebanon. Zionist barbarians

are killing babies. You are not a super power; only a super Masonic puppy." Another writer asked, "How can you find Israel's actions right when it is responsible for the deaths of tens of thousands of innocent people?" A third questioned, "Why are you calling Israel's cruelty self-defense and (sic.) while considering all Muslim attacks as terrorism? Aren't the U.S. and Israel the biggest terrorists in the world?" One writer asked, "May I learn whether you are a human being or not?"

¶4. Complaints that the U.S. defended Israel's actions changed into charges of complicity in the wake of the July 30 Qana bombing. Reacting to the graphic images of dead children in Turkish newspapers and TV, one writer asked, "Does it give you pleasure to see the pictures?" Another asked, "When will you stop murdering children?" A third commented, "The U.S. gave Israel bombs to be used on the Hezbollah shelters but children's bodies come out of the shelters; those children could be yours." Another writer asked, "Why is the U.S. allowing Israel to kill innocent civilians...while pressuring Iran...? Isn't this sheer hypocrisy?"

¶5. A number of messages also accused the United States of practicing a double standard, by accepting/supporting Israel's military actions across its border while not supporting cross-border operations by the Turkish military against the PKK in northern Iraq. One writer asked, "Israel has the right to launch a cross-border operation and Turkey doesn't?" Another wondered why the U.S. is maintaining a "double standard" against the PKK and "doing nothing," concluding that "with this approach the U.S. is giving a helping hand to anti-western sentiment and to radicals."

¶6. When the conflict came to a halt, the easing of the intense media barrage was accompanied by a sharp decrease in condemnation messages sent to "Ask the Ambassador." The Embassy place an answer on the "Ask the Ambassador" site that accurately described U.S. policies on Lebanon, while Embassy officers drew on Washington guidance and speeches to directly rebut spurious allegations and false accusations.

¶7. COMMENT: It is clear that the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah stirred and aggravated the feelings of those in Turkey who hold negative views of the United States. The daily stream of graphic images and strong commentary from the Turkish and regional media translated into a burst of anger directed squarely at the U.S. It remains to be seen whether the conflict will have a lasting effect on Turkish public opinion toward the United States. Embassy Ankara will continue to monitor "Ask the Ambassador" submissions to provide one quick and direct indicator of Turkish moods in the coming months.

Visit Ankara's Classified Web Site at
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/ankara/>

WILSON